The Fourth Ward Boy Who Became Governor

Picturesque Life Story of "Al" Smith.

by Martin Green.

How Governor Al Smith and His Family Set Some New Social and Civic Precedents at Albany.

NO happier Chief Executive ever took the oath of office in the Capitol at Albany than Al Smith. He was standing on the height he had marked for his feet in his secret communings with the future. Honor and responsibility that had appeared to be inaccessible a few short months ago were in his grasp.

And no Governor was ever greeted with moree genuine good will. From all over the State came Republicans who had served with him in the Legislature, with assurances that he had earned his place.

Months after the inauguration I was in the Governor's private office one afternoon and he showed me a letter of congratulation he had just received from a remote part of the Philippine Islands. It was from a man he went to school with in the 4th Ward. This led to the production, at a later date, of bales of letters he had received following his election from friends in every State in the Union and from nearly every part of the world.

"Consult the history of the city," he said, in discussing the letters, "and you will find that the lower end of Manhattan Island was the beginning of the State of New York. At one time practically the whole white population of the State lived there.

"It was from the lower part of Manhattan that the adventurous pioneers moved up through the Hudson Valley and out through the Mohawk Valley and beyond. That movement has continued ever since. It was particularly strong in my boyhood and young manhood. Horace Greeley's advice, 'Young man, go West,' still carried force. From the letters I have received it appears that the migrants from the old Fourth Ward have contributed something of benefit to every community they have settled in."

Al Smith, Mrs. Smith, the five little Smiths and their big dog, Caesar, probably constituted the liveliest family that ever occupied the Executive Mansion. They kept open house. For the first time in the memory of residents of that part of Albany the children of the neighborhood had free access to the grounds and the house. The young Smiths were as democratic as their father. They moved in Albany just as they lived in the Fourth Ward.

THE NEIGHBORLY VISITOR.

The Smith family had been in the Executive Mansion about a month when the door bell rang one evening. The Smiths were at supper—in the Smith family they eat breakfast in the morning and dinner at noon and the evening meal is supper. The Governor went to the door and opened it.

A woman stood on the porch. She was plainly embarrassed.

"Are you Gov. Smith?" she asked.

"I have that honor," replied the Governor.

"I'm afraid you will think me foolish," said the visitor, "but I am Mrs. So-and-So, and a neighbor, and I want to know if my little daughter is here."

"Sure," answered Al. She's inside at supper with the family. Come in and give her the once over."

The neighbor mother entered the Executive Mansion for the first time in her life and found her daughter in the seat of honor at the Smith supper table to the right of the Governor's chair.

"I couldn't believe it," she stammered, "although she is a truthful child. When she told me one of your daughters had invited her over to din—I mean supper—I have seen several Governors' families come and go—well, I just had to come over and see for myself."

On a Saturday night a distinguished New York publicist visited the Executive Mansion on the invitation of the Governor to talk over the proposition of giving the Legislature the power to reorganize the State government. They were in the Governor's study on the second floor. Three times during the conference Al excused himself and was gone about five minutes.

ALSO A SATURDAY NIGHT CUSTOM.

During those absences the visitor heard, in a distant part of the mansion, the deep voice of the Governor mingled with shouts of boyish laughter and splashing of water. After the third interruption Al explained.

"In this family," he said, "we adhere to the custom of taking a bath every Saturday night whether we need it or not. Ever since my boys were old enough to frequent a bathtub I have made it a custom to turn the hose on them every Saturday night. My mother came up to-day with the youngest boy of my sister, Mrs. Glynn, from Brooklyn and he and my two boys have been taking turns in having the hose turned on them."

Al Smith frequently conferred with personal friends and political adjutants at the Executive Mansion in the evening. When bed time came—and it comes early in the Smith family—no matter who the visitor might be, the children trooped into the conference room to kiss their daddy good night. Down in the Fourth Ward when the children were small they always said their night prayers at their father's knee.

Albany has an aristocracy considerably more exclusive than that of New York City. The so-called first families in Albany are among the oldest in the State. Soon after he was inaugurated Governor, Al Smith received an invitation to dine at the home of one of those old families. He sent his regrets. There was some comment about it in Albany society circles, and this comment, reaching the Governor's ears, impelled him to an explanation.

"I have been in Albany," he said, "for fifteen years. I have met all the members of that family socially a number of times. This is the first time they have invited me to their home. Gov. Al Smith may be different from Assemblyman Al Smith to them—but not to me."

One evening the Governor telephoned from his office in the Capitol that he would not be home to supper. He got in about 9 o'clock. He had been to the humble home of an old Albany friend.

"I went out there," said the Governor, "because his two boys are going away to work to-morrow, and and they don't know when they will be back. Years ago I jokingly promised those boys, who were little fellows then, that I would be their guest at their home when I was Governor. They reminded me of the promise this afternoon."

The Charity Ball is the leading annual society affair in Albany, and the Governor is the guest of honor. Prior to the first charity ball in the Smith administration there was a great deal of curiosity in high social circles about how the man from the water front of the East Side would conduct himself. Some people appeared to think that Al Smith might appear in a sack suit or a red necktie.

They found the Governor to be a man of dignity and repose. Standing in his box he received and greeted the people who had expected to meet some sort of a freak. He had something to say to each guest and he said the right thing every time. Members of the Albany 400 wondered if they hadn't been misinformed about the East Side of New York.

Al Smith liked everything connected with the duties of the office of Governor except the requirement that the Chief Executive of the State shall entertain requests for commutation of the death sentence in cases of conviction of murder. He is of the opinion that it is an injustice to put this responsibility on the Governor; that requests for commutations should be handled by a specially appointed board operating along the lines of the Board of Pardons or that powers of the Board of Pardons should be extended to embrace the review of appeals from sentences to death.

With the exception of Hamby, the bank robber and arch murderer, every person sentenced to death in this State in the last twenty years has appealed to the Governor for commutation of sentence. It has been the custom of Governors to allow the death sentence to stand in all cases where guilt was clearly proved and extenuating circumstances were lacking.

Veteran employees of the Governor's office in Albany have told me that Al Smith gave more time and attention to appeals from the death sentence than any other Governor in their recollection. His intensely sympathetic nature made him doubly susceptible to the pleas of mothers and sisters and he spent many unhappy hours patiently listening to those pleas.

Several times he confessed to his office force that he had been unable to sleep all night after consideration of an appeal. He went over the record of every case presented and thus, incidentally, grounded himself in knowledge of the criminal law. One of the Judges of the Court of Appeals has often said that Al Smith is as good a criminal lawyer as there is in the State.

The Standard Dictionary defines clemency as "Mildness toward offenders or dependents; moderation in the use of power; leniency; forbearance; mercy." That was Al Smith's conception. He sought for occasion to be lenient, forbearant and merciful.

It was not uncommon for him to devote a week or more to the study of a single case. He would take the papers home with him at night and bring them with him to New York when he visited the city.

On one occasion he made a special trip to New York to personally inspect the scene of a gang murder on the lower west side. He had been overwhelmed with pleas for a commutation of the convicted murderer, a young man whose family had been friendly with the Smith family for half a century.

"There is only one doubtful point in this case," said the Governor. "It rests in the testimony of a police officer, who describes the escape of the murderer. On the face of the testimony, I do not believe the fleeing man could have done all the things the policeman said he did in the limited time he was under observation."

The Governor came to New York one afternoon and that night he visited the scene of the crime and went through the series of movements described in the policeman's testimony, one of which involved jumping from a window. He found that the time set by the officer was ample. Returning to Albany that night he refused the application for clemency the next day.

He suffered the keenest distress on the days of the execution of men whose lives he could not conscientiously save. He knew the day and almost the hour of the execution of every man that went to the electric chair during his terms of office because the families and lawyers of convicted murderer kept bombarding the Executive until the last minute. Some Governors have given scant heed to pleas following an announcement that the conviction would be allowed to stand. Al Smith entertained every plea and gave counsel every opportunity to produce new evidence.

(Continued Monday.)

Underwood & Underwood.

TWO PICTURES OF AL SMITH AT THE TIME HE WAS PROVING THAT AN OCCUPANT OF THE EXECUTIVE MANSION CAN BE AS DEMOCRATIC AS HIS PARTY NAME.

THE HOUSE OF PERIL

MASTER MYSTERY STORY by LOUIS TRACY OF NEW YORK LIFE

THE STORY TO DATE.

BROWN, the butler of the Fifth Avenue mansion of Anthony Van Cortland, finds his employer dead and twelve guests unconscious around a table where the thirteen had gathered for a convivial celebration of the Ace Club the night before. A goldfish in a bowl in the room is floating dead. A strange odor pervades the room.

Capt. Stuart, an army officer, calls for Van Cortland to go for a ride in Central Park and discovers the state of affairs. After talking with Morrison, the chauffeur; Roberts, the valet; Marie, the maid, and Brown, Capt. Stuart calls Police Headquarters and in a few minutes a queer-looking little man appears at the mansion and introduces himself as Mr. Furneaux of the detective force.

Capt. Stuart, chosen by Furneaux to notify Miss Mary Dixon, Van Cortland's fiancee, of his death, performs the disagreeable task, but is impressed by the fact that she shows no deep grief.

Discovery is made of a threatening typewritten note in which Van Cortland was told he could never marry Mary Dixon.

Furneaux's theory is that the murderer, after administering a knockout draught to the gaffy and pouring the balance into the gold fish bowl, administered a deadly dose to Van Cortland.

The butler tells of a visit by Miss Baker and her father to Van Cortland and a conversation in which the dead man made light of the threatening note.

Stuart overhears a conversation in which Montagu Toyn says that Mary Dixon agreed to marry Van Cortland because he saved her father from failure in a deal in rubber stocks.

Capt. Crossley, precinct commander, causes the arrest of a tramp who has a ring he claims to have found in Central Park opposite the Van Cortland mansion. Officer Flanagan, who made the arrest, is scratched while examining the ring and dies just as Van Cortland died.

Willie Dixon invites Capt. Stuart to stay in the Dixon flat while his father and sister are in the Adirondacks and makes it clear that the invitation is extended at Mary's suggestion.

Mary Dixon adds the fact that Frank Baker's collection comprised a poison ring but she believes him innocent of Van Cortland's death.

Capt. Stuart is surprised to learn that Mary Dixon has cherished a newspaper clipping showing his decoration by a French general with the croix de guerre.

At a dinner to former Ace Club members Durrane explains the theory that Van Cortlandt's death was brought about by an outsider.

Stuart and Willie Dixon got to the Adirondacks with arms and amunition. Furneaux shows up in charge of Durrane's motorboat. Durrane takes the place on the lake adjoining that of the Dixons.

Furneaux discloses to Stuart and Miss Dixon his theory that the murder was done by one of the members of the dinner party who was in love with Mary.

Under Chief Winter's direction, all hands devote themselves to the solution of the mystery, keeping in mind the peculiarities of a neurotic individual, a former member of the Ace Club.

CHAPTER XVII.

A Disquisition on Neurosis.

IT transpired, as the newspaper reporter puts it, that there were others who shared Willie Dixon's opinions. Stuart had not reached the house before he was overtaken by the boatman, who caught his eye and held up a crooked finger.

"Jest a minnit, 'cap,'" said the man, in a low tone. "I'd like ter hev a word with yer."

"Certainly," said Stuart, "but won't you change your clothes first?"

"I had a notion ez how, p'haps, you wouldn't mind comin' to my room. We kin talk kind o' private that-a-way."

Stuart told the others he would join them shortly, and accompanied the Skipper to the servants' quarters. There he was surprised to see Winter peeping at him through the window of the butler's room, while Furneaux was scurrying back to "Sans Souci."

"Wilson," he said, Jake Wilson being the Skipper's name, "are you going to tell me something about the accident to Mr. Baker?"

"Yes, sir. T'wan't no accident. An' I ain't satisfied ter keep things to myself. But what's the use o' speakin' ter old man Dixon, an' Mr. Willie is only a kid."

"A friend of mine has just turned up, and I have the greatest faith in his judgment. Would you like me to ask him to hear what you have to say?"

The mountain and lake folk of Northern New York State seldom care to express themselves openly before total strangers, and the Skip's dubious headshake emphasized the fact.

"I wouldn't make the suggestion if this matter were not serious," said Stuart, looking the other square in the face. "You probably know as well as I, Wilson, that things are far from being right here. Now I can assure you that you will not regret calling into our councils the man who is now in Mr. Brown's room."

"Wall, 'cap,' if yer sez it, it goes."

So Stuart beckoned to Winter, who followed them to the boatman's habitat, which consisted of four rooms built on to the service wing; Wilson lived there all the year round, acting as caretaker during the winter.

His wife happened to be out, since she, like the rest of the staff, thought the boating party would be absent all day. There was no false modesty about the Skip. He procured a dry suit, linen and shoes, stripped with remarkable celerity, and towelled his body vigorously while he talked.

"What's your name, mister?" he inquired, eyeing Winter curiously. The detective was now clothed in his ordinary attire, a fact in itself of much significance to Stuart.

"Winter," said the Chief. "James Leander Winter, Chief of the New York Detective Bureau."

"Snakes alive!" cried the astonished boatman.

Stuart told the others he would join them shortly, and accompanied the Skipper to the servants' quarters. There he was surprised to see Winter peeping at him through the window of the butler's room, while Furneaux was scurrying back to "Sans Souci."

"Wilson," he said, Jake Wilson being the Skipper's name, "are you going to tell me something about the accident to Mr. Baker?"

"Yes, sir. T'wan't no accident. An' I ain't satisfied ter keep things to myself. But what's the use o' speakin' ter old man Dixon, an' Mr. Willie is only a kid."

"A friend of mine has just turned up, and I have the greatest faith in his judgment. Would you like me to ask him to hear what you have to say?"

The mountain and lake folk of Northern New York State seldom care to express themselves openly before total strangers, and the Skip's dubious headshake emphasized the fact.

"I wouldn't make the suggestion if this matter were not serious," said Stuart, looking the other square in the face. "You probably know as well as I, Wilson, that things are far from being right here. Now I can assure you that you will not regret calling into our councils the man who is now in Mr. Brown's room."

"Wall, 'cap,' if yer sez it, it goes."

So Stuart beckoned to Winter, who followed them to the boatman's habitat, which consisted of four rooms built on to the service wing; Wilson lived there all the year round, acting as caretaker during the winter.

His wife happened to be out, since she, like the rest of the staff, thought the boating party would be absent all day. There was no false modesty about the Skip. He procured a dry suit, linen and shoes, stripped with remarkable celerity, and towelled his body vigorously while he talked.

"What's your name, mister?" he inquired, eyeing Winter curiously. The detective was now clothed in his ordinary attire, a fact in itself of much significance to Stuart.

"Winter," said the Chief. "James Leander Winter, Chief of the New York Detective Bureau."

"Snakes alive!" cried the astonished boatman.

"An likewise 'By heck!' What the trouble?"

"Let me begin, Skip," put in Stuart, and he supplied a brief resume of the morning's outing, stopping short at the bathing incident.

"Well, gents, it was this yer way," went on the boatman. "It seemed ter me when Mr. Baker an' Mr. Durrane touched the canoe in the first lap of the third race, they wuz both pretty well all in, or looked it, so I kep' an eye on 'em, an' even moved the canoe in a bit. Good job I did, or I might never ha' ketched Mr. Baker's hair as he wuz goin' down. But I'm derned if Mr. Durrane didn't draw away like an otter on the return trip. Mr. Baker yelled suthin', but Mr. Durrane on'y went the faster, though he must ha' heered. Then Mr. Baker cried 'I'm done!' an', like every other blamed fool in trouble in deep water, threw up his hands. By that time Mr. Durrane was ten yards ahead, but he never turned. So I chipped in.

"You mean that he thought his friend might sink and be caught in the weeds!" said Stuart.

"It sure is a hard thing ter say, Cap', but it looked derned like it. An' didn't he ez good ez tell me ter keep me mouth shut when he offered to shove a hundred dollars?"

All three men caught the footsteps of some one walking quickly across the paved yard without. Winter, with amazing swiftness, vanished into an inner room, and Stuart had barely time to fling the boatman a warning glance when Durrane entered.

"Ah, here you are!" he cried, as though fully expecting to find Stuart there.

"Yes," said the soldier, smiling, "I thought it my duty to see that the Skip changed his clothes at once. He's a careless sort of cuss in such matters."

"Quite right. I'm glad you did it. I had the same suspicion. And here's your century, Skip."

The boatman was in no hurry to take the proffered note.

"I don't see ez how I earned anything from you, Mr. Durrane," he said stubbornly.

Brown took Mr. Durrane's compliments to Miss Mary, with the request that she would come to the veranda for a moment. Very reluctantly, she did so.

"I am here to apologize for this morning's mishap," began Durrane, and he supplied a brief resume of the incident, though it was an accident, pure and simple."

"Why, of course, Phil," said the girl. "You surely don't need to tell me that?"

Mary was ill at ease as Durrane tried to explain. She excused herself and flounced off, crossing the inner room without even a glance at Stuart. Durrane walked slowly to his own house, with bent head and eyes that gave no heed to his surroundings.

At luncheon the young people spoke freely of Baker's escape, though they dropped no hint to Mr. Dixon, senior, as to any malicious intent on Durrane's part. But he was manifestly ill at ease.

"I shall be glad when this atmosphere of tragedy is dispelled, once and for all," he said irritably. "Is nothing being done to discover the cause of Tony van Cortland's death? I have often heard of the gross incompetence of our detective system, and surely this is a genuine instance of it!"

Willie Dixon, as usual, rose to the occasion.

"The hands of the police are tied in that affair, pop," he said. "I don't mean there is any graft, or that sort of thing, but they have to watch their step. You see, the theory is that Tony was killed by one of his twelve friends, and the said twelve are sons of New York's chief citizens. I'm one."

"Why has Frank Baker come to Paul Smith's? His name figured prominently in the inquiry."

"It's my opinion, Pop, that the less we know about the affair the happier we'll be," answered Willie.

"Well, if he really wants to drown himself I hope he will choose some other locality. I've been thinking things over, Willie. You must stay here as long as Durrane and this other man are here. You, too, Capt. Stuart, if it is convenient. I don't want my little girl to be mixed up in any more of these wretched accidents, or whatever else they may be."

He certainly did not expect that his daughter would spring up and throw her arms around him, with a hearty kiss, and a whispered: "You're a dear, good, thoughtful pop, that's what you are. So, there!"

"Well, well," he blustered. "Why all this fuss? What do you say, Stuart?"

"I shall be delighted to prolong a wonderful holiday," said Stuart, wondering what had occurred to cause such a change of mind in his host. A call from Winter brought the young people together again in the afternoon.

"We must hold a sort of conference," said Winter. "Brown, I'll tell you our secrets afterwards. Just now I want you to mount guard. If anyone comes from the next house give us timely warning so that Mr. Furneaux may slip down to the kitchen, where, I am given to understand, he is courting Catherine."

When the door was closed behind the butler, the Chief spoke. His aspect was grave, and, it may be, a trifle disconcerted.

"I have various items of news," he began. "In the first place, Toyn rang up one of my men as soon as Durrane's letter reached him this morning. It contained some peculiar instructions. Do any of you recall the strange history of Marie Bashkirtseff."

Winter pointed the stub of his cigar at Furneaux. "You tell 'em," he said. "This psychology stuff is in your line."

Furneaux bowed with much grace and told the story of the Russian girl's tragedy.

"A pocket marvel, ain't he?" said Winter, surveying his aide with proud eyes. "When he talks like that he always reminds me of the yokels listening to the village schoolmaster in Goldsmith's

> And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew
> That one small head could carry all he knew."

Mary tittered. It was nearly her first experience of the manner in which this queer pair of detectives carried on a discussion of even the most serious topic.

"Well, we had to understand the facts about poor Marie," went on Winter. "Durrane picked up a picture of hers—a studio portrait—in Paris. I don't know whether it's a fake or not, but he has it, and his letter to Toyn requested its despatch to Paul Smith's. It's on the way now."

"Let us, then, pursue another line of inquiry," chirped Furneaux, whose very tone caused the chief to glare at his suspiciously. "Mankind, of the lymphatic and neurotic, a compound to which we are supposed to belong, is made up to three well-defined physical, and temperamental types—the scrofuletic, the lymphatic, and the neurotic. Marie Bashkirtseff and I are perfect examples of the last-named, which is largely responsible for insanity and genius. Mr. Winter is a vivid specimen of the scrofuletic, which is not prone to insanity, but goes in for pugilism and wife-beating, and has never been known to produce a genius. Philip Durrane is a blend of the lymphatic and neurotic, a compound which supplies nearly all our most noted criminals, with a fair sprinkling of lunatics. He is a keen student of a certain class of erotic literature. Marie Bashkirtseff's 'Journal,' the letters of 'Abelard,' the 'Confessions of Jean Jacques Rousseau,' the 'Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellina' and other similar books are at his bedside."

He paused. There was a slow, dignified step in the corridor. The butler knocked, but opened the door at once.

"I think you're wanted, Mr. Furneaux," he said.

"A-hem!" cried the detective. "Never mind!" he went on, with an airy hand-wave. "Mr. Winter can now get in some good work annotating my remarks."

They waited to see if he returned, but it was evident that the "Sans Souci" launch was required. So the Chief took up the parable.

"Don't be alarmed, Miss Dixon," and Winter smiled cheerfully. "Mr. Furneaux watches Durrane all the time. He saw him trying to exercise a mesmeric influence on you, and knew exactly when he failed, or when the magnetic current was broken, which would be about four or five minutes after it had been established."

"Never, never shall I miss saying my prayers before going to bed!" vowed Mary, and her earnestness eased the tension by causing a laugh.

"Well, now, where do we stand?" continued the Chief. "The picture, whatsoever the merit Durrane attaches to it, cannot be here before the morning. My own far-fetched theory is that it will be given to you. . . . Yes, I mean that"—— for the girl was naturally still more surprised. "People who believe in those media endeavor to use them. Please forgive me, but I must say it. Durrane is crazy to marry you."

She took this quite calmly.

"I have known that a long time," she said, "and I would not be his wife if he were the only man left in the whole world."

"Lucky for you and the man you will wed, he is not."

"Please carry your theories or surmises a step further," said Stuart firmly. "What is the particular form of danger you fear for Miss Dixon?"

"I—really—don't know. Furneaux would give you a dozen ingenious hints. I am not built that way. I cannot project myself into the brain-pan of a neurasthenic. Hello, what's that?"

"The Sans Souci launch," said Willie Dixon. "I'll go and see who's in it."

He had only to cross the corridor, and look out through a window commanding the lake.

"Durrane alone," he announced, "with Mr. Furneaux driving, of course."

"Well, this trip may bring another ray of light," sighed Winter, who was honestly perturbed by the unexpected summons to New York. "Meanwhile, Miss Dixon, can I occupy this room to-night?"

"Certainly. Let me get you a better one."

"No—I prefer this. It commands the yard, and Furneaux can reach me easily if he wants me."

Mr. Winter returned without Mary, who was giving Catherine some housewifely instructions. Stuart closed the door, which had been left open. He eyed the Chief for a second or two in silence, being a man whose habit it was to think before he spoke.

But the detective merely smiled, and lit the end of a fresh Havana.

"You needn't fly into a rage with me, Capt. Stuart," he said pleasantly. "Miss Dixon's life is quite safe while Furneaux and I are here. We guarantee it. But we cannot be sure of her well-being after we leave for New York, and that is why, if the boiler doesn't burst within the next twenty-four hours, she, at least, must come with us to-morrow evening."

(Continued Monday.)